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## AN INTRODUCTION TO A FIRST-CENTURY POLYMATH<sup>1</sup>

The chief reason which prompted this paper is the apparent ignorance among classicists of the scope and the contents of the work I have in mind. I refer to the *Naturalis Historia* of C. Plinius Secundus, Pliny the Elder, who was born in 24 A. D., at Novum Comum, in Northern Italy. The sources of information about his life are a biography by Suetonius<sup>2</sup>, his nephew's admiring testimony in several of his letters<sup>3</sup>, and supplementary material derived from his own colossal work.

We know that Pliny was of equestrian rank, and that, after coming to Rome at a very early age, he received there a good education, especially, as internal evidence shows, in rhetoric. He spent a great part of his life in the service of the State, either as military official or as *procurator*. In the former capacity he served in Germany, and possibly in Syria (if so, his service there included the siege of Jerusalem, in 70, under Titus). At least, he struck up a close friendship with Titus before Titus became Emperor. As *procurator* he lived in Gaul, in Africa, and in Spain. All these offices, which, Suetonius avers, he administered with the highest integrity, widened his horizon and brought him invaluable information.

His tragic death is recorded by Pliny the Younger, in his memorable accounts of the catastrophe which buried Herculaneum and Pompeii (*Epistulae* 6.16, 6.20). Pliny the Elder was on duty as Admiral of the fleet at Misenum in August, 79, when the disastrous eruption took place. In his zeal for scientific investigation he made for the danger zone, from which others were fleeing, and succumbed there to asphyxiation.

Through his unflagging thirst for knowledge and his indefatigable industry in amassing it he left to his nephew 160 volumes of extracts, written on both sides of the sheets, in an extremely small hand (Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.5.17). His rigid economy of time is accounted for by these volumes. Soon after midnight he began his studies (Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.5.8). He utilized every moment, taking notes even during his meals, as he listened to a reader. On one occasion he remonstrated with his nephew for the time wasted in taking a walk (Pliny, *Epistulae* 3.5.16). Of the half-dozen works by Pliny that are now lost, one was a technical military manual (*De Iaculatione Equestris*), another a biography of Pomponius Secundus (*De Vita Pomponii Secundi*), another the history of the wars with the Germans (*Bellariorum Germaniae Viginti Libri*), another a history con-

tinuing from the point where Aufidius Bassus left off (*A Fine Aufidi Bassi Libri*). Two of his works were on language (*Studiosi Tres Libri*, and *Dubius Sermo*). Some scholars see in the historical work entitled *A Fine Aufidi Bassi Libri* a principal source for the Histories of Tacitus.

Pliny's supreme memorial is his one extant production, the *Naturalis Historia*, an encyclopedia in thirty-seven books. Although it was dedicated to Titus in 77, the work was published posthumously<sup>3a</sup>.

The arrangement of the work is as follows. Book 1 is an exhaustive table of contents, book by book; Book 2 gives Pliny's physical concepts; Books 3-6 deal with the geography and the ethnography of Europe, Africa, and Asia; Book 7 treats anthropology, Books 8-11 zoology, Books 12-19 botany. Books 20-27 are devoted to *materia medica* from botanical sources; the next five books (28-32) give like material from zoological sources. The last five books (33-37) deal with mineralogy and metallurgy. Included in these last five books is a survey of the application of mineralogy and metallurgy to medicine and the fine arts.

The *Naturalis Historia* is not a great work of literature, but it is a priceless storehouse of information on every branch of natural science as known in the ancient world.

Pliny calculated that his work was a repertory of twenty thousand facts—or what he took to be facts (*Praefatio* 17). These were secured from about two thousand volumes, written by nearly five hundred authors (*ibidem*). Pliny's practice of acknowledging his sources was contrary to the custom of his time. Scholars have raised a great deal of discussion about the real sources of the *Natural History*. Some think Pliny an untrustworthy compiler who never handled Aristotle in Greek, others maintain that he used Aristotle through Pompeius Trogus. One group believes that Pliny merely plundered the encyclopedia of Verrius Flaccus, and invented his list of authorities.

It has been well said<sup>4</sup> that Pliny

... was too bookish to be original, too receptive to be experimental, too acquisitive to be discriminating. He tended rather to be overpowered by his enormous material than to marshal it with unerring critical control

He noted down from his reading every item, whether fact or fiction, without verification through experi-

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read at the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, held at the Central High School, Philadelphia, May 6-7, 1932.  
<sup>2</sup>Deperditorum Librorum Reliquiae 10. <This Vita Plini Secundi may be found in the work entitled Suetonius, With an English Translation, 2,504-505, by John C. Rolfe (The Loeb Classical Library, 1914). C. K. >.

<sup>3</sup>3.5, 5.8, 6.16, 6.20.  
<sup>3a</sup>The latest edition of the text of Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* is to be found in a work entitled *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis Historiae Libri XXXVII. Post Ludovici Iani Obitum Recognovit et Scripturae Discrepantia Adiecta Edidit Carolus Mayhoff* (Five Volumes. Leipzig, Teubner, 1906, 1909, 1892, 1897, 1897. On the title-page of Volume 2 the word *Iterum* appears before *Edidit*. It probably should have appeared at the same place on the title-page to Volume 1. References to this work are made by Book and by the numbers that appear on the side-margins of the pages. C. K. >.

<sup>4</sup>J. Wight Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age*, 364 (London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1927).

mentation<sup>a</sup>. We must remember that scientific instruments and appliances were as yet very imperfect. Pliny accepts portents, as did many a Stoic. But there is a limit even to his credulity, for he rejects the werewolf story as a fable<sup>b</sup>.

However, with all its shortcomings, this work represents the highest level reached by ancient science after Aristotle. It is an index to the prevailing science of Imperial Rome. It long exercised great influence both in its original shape and in various abridgments. Mr. Duff says of Pliny<sup>c</sup>, "Himself a pre-eminent epitomator and excerptor, Pliny in turn fell into the hands of the epitomators and excerptors of the third and fourth centuries...." Symmachus, who lived in the fourth century, tells us<sup>d</sup> that Pliny's work was much read in his day. Some two hundred manuscripts of Pliny's work survive, a fact which bears witness to its popularity in the Middle Ages.

But now I should like to direct attention to the work itself, and by extracts from it to give some idea, faint though it be, of the material incorporated in Book 7, the anthropological section of the work, the section which treats man and human physiology. From this book I have selected, for the most part, the unusual, the striking, and the fantastic in order to give a cross-section of the subject-matter in a part of this encyclopedic.

Pliny prefaces this book by philosophical reflections. For man's sake, he says, all other things appear to have been produced by nature, though with such severe penalties for the enjoyment of these bounteous gifts that it is far from easy to determine whether nature has been in fact a kind parent or a merciless step-mother (1<sup>e</sup>). Nature clothes man alone, of all animated beings, with the spoils of others, while to all other animated beings it has given various particular kinds of coverings of their own (shells, crusts, spines, hides, furs). Man alone, cast naked at the very moment of his birth upon the naked earth, does nature abandon to cries, lamentations, and tears (2). Introduced thus to the light, man has fetters and swathings instantly put upon all his limbs; none even of the brutes that are born among us is so treated. The animal which is destined to command all the others lies fast bound hand and foot, and weeping aloud! Such is the penalty which he has to pay

<sup>a</sup> For some very interesting and striking instances of failure by scholars, ancient and modern, especially the latter, to test, by experiment, statements see my article entitled Scholarship, *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 21.81-84, 89-92 (January 9, 16, 1928). Especially striking, for example, is the failure of all scholars, down to 1853, to interpret the word *bidens* correctly. For my discussion of this matter see *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 21.82-83. Aulus Gellius discusses the word (16.6). After giving various theories with respect to its meaning he says, in § 9, *Haec Hygini opinio an vera sit non argumentis, sed oculis videri potest. Here, in words, he sets forth the right method. But he evidently never looked at a sheep, to test the matter for himself. Nor, so far as the records show, did any one else, till the middle of the last century, look at a sheep as a way of determining the meaning of *bidens*.*

Pertinent, too, are the notes that have appeared in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* concerning the effect of wind upon waters of river and sea: see 19.83-84, 126, 21.193, 22.40, 205-206, 27.64. C. K. >

<sup>b</sup> In *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 26.97-98 Mr. Richard Henry Crum has an interesting note entitled The Werewolf Again. He comments on the refusal of Pliny the Elder (N. H. 8.81) to accept a story about the werewolf, and then over against that sets Pliny's readiness to accept (8.123) a somewhat startling story about the wolf. C. K. >

<sup>c</sup> This reference, and like references below in round brackets are to the paragraphs of Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book 7, as numbered on the side-margins of Mayhoff's work: see note 3a, above. C. K. >

<sup>d</sup> 384 (see note 4, above). <sup>e</sup> *Epistulae* 1.24.

on beginning life, and that for the sole fault of having been born. Alas, for the folly of those who can think that a creature which begins its career thus was born for the display of vanity! (3).

To man alone, of all animated beings, has it been given to grieve, to him alone to be guilty of luxury and excess. Man is the only being that is a prey to ambition, to avarice, to an immoderate desire of life, to superstition; he alone troubles himself about his burial, and about what is to become of him after death. By no other creature is life held on a tenure so frail. Other animals live at peace with those of their own kind; we see them unite only to make a stand against those of a different species, but, alas, most of man's misfortunes are occasioned by man (4-5).

How remarkable it is, exclaims Pliny, that the human countenance, although it is composed of but ten parts, is so fashioned that among so many thousands of men there are no two in existence who cannot be distinguished each from the other (6-8).

Under the caption of strange practices Pliny lists the cannibalism of certain tribes of Scythians, and adds that even in Italy there formerly existed tribes with these monstrous propensities (9). In the far North, says Pliny, there exists the tribe called Arimaspi, whose members have only one eye, which is placed in the middle of the forehead. This race is said to carry on a perpetual warfare with the Griffins, monsters with wings, for the possession of gold dug by the latter out of mines (10). In a valley of Mt. Imaus, there is a savage race whose feet are turned backwards; yet they possess wonderful velocity, and wander about indiscriminately with the wild beasts (11). The members of this tribe cannot breathe in any climate except their own. The Scythian cannibals were in the habit of drinking out of human skulls and of placing scalps, with the hair attached, upon their breasts, like napkins (12). In Albania there is a race of men who have green eyes and white hair from earliest childhood, and who see better by night than by day (12). In the vicinity of the Hellespont there formerly existed a tribe whose members, by their touch, were able to cure those who had been stung by serpents (13). Varro is mentioned (13) as saying that some persons are still found in that locality whose saliva effectually cures the stings of serpents. It was supposed that in Africa (14) a tribe existed whose constituents had a certain kind of poison in their bodies that was fatal to serpents; these persons had such a strong body odor that they put snakes to sleep. At birth, the children of this tribe were exposed to serpents to prove the fidelity of the wives, since the serpents were not repelled by children born in adultery (14). Pliny maintains (15) that all men possess in their bodies a poison which acts upon serpents, and that human saliva destroys them the moment it enters their throats, especially if it happens to be the saliva of a man who is fasting.

The Androgyni of Africa unite the two sexes in the same individual, and perform alternately the functions of each sex (15). In the same country there are certain enchanters who, by means of their charms, can cause

cattle to perish, trees to wither, and infants to die (16). Some persons have the power of fascination with the eyes, and can even kill those on whom they fix their gaze for any length of time. The age of puberty is particularly susceptible to the malign influence of such persons (16). A still more striking story is that the persons who possess this power of fascination have two pupils in each eye (16), while some have a double pupil in one eye, and the figure of a horse in the other (17). The bodies of these persons will not sink in water, though they are weighed down by their garments (17). The great toe of King Pyrrhus's right foot cured diseases of the spleen by merely touching a patient. When Pyrrhus died, this toe could not be consumed on the pyre with the rest of his body, and so it was *conditu<s>... loculo in templo* (20).

In India, Pliny says, everything grows excessively (21). There are reeds of such enormous length that each portion between two joints is made into a boat able to hold three men. Many persons in India, Pliny thinks, are more than eight feet high (22). These people never expectorate, are subject to no pains in the head, the teeth, or the eyes, and rarely in any other parts of the body (22). On the mountain called Nulo there is a race in which persons have eight toes on each foot (22). There is also a tribe of men who have heads of dogs and clothe themselves with the skins of wild beasts (23). Instead of speaking they bark. According to Ctesias, there was a race in India whose members had only one leg, yet were able to leap with surprising agility (23). They were in the habit of lying on their backs and protecting themselves from the heat of the sun *umbra pedum* (23).

We read of men without necks, and with eyes on their shoulders (23), and of some with holes instead of nostrils in their faces (25), and with flexible feet like the body of a serpent (25). Near the source of the Ganges are found men without mouths, whose bodies are rough and hairy. These subsist only by breathing and by the odors which they inhale (25). Pygmies are mentioned who are only twenty-seven inches tall (26). Some individuals in India live to the four hundredth year (27). There is a tribe the members of which have white hair in youth, black hair in old age (28). Among the Calingae of India the women reach puberty at the age of five, and do not live beyond the eighth year (30). There are some men with ears so large that the ears cover their whole bodies (30).

The next caption is marvelous births (33-35). We find it stated that in the Peloponnesus a woman gave birth four successive times to five children at a birth, and that most of the children survived (33). Occasionally, in Egypt, seven children are brought forth at one birth (33). We read of a woman who had thirty children (34). Alcippe gave birth to an elephant (34). At the beginning of the Marsian War a female slave was delivered of a serpent (34). A girl who was living at Casinum was changed into a boy (36). Pliny says that he saw a woman, L. Cossicus by name, changed

<sup>7</sup> It is to be remembered that I am pointing out the unusual and the striking; otherwise we might regard the *Natural History* as a joke-book or a book of fairy tales—and rightly so.

into a man the very day on which she was married (36).

It is stated that Zoroaster was the only human being who ever laughed on the day on which he was born (72). His brain pulsated so strongly that it repelled a hand that was laid upon it (72). A mountain in Crete, burst open by the action of an earthquake, revealed a body, sixty-nine feet in height, standing upright (73). Pliny asserts that the tallest man seen in his day was Gabbaras, who was brought from Arabia by the Emperor Claudius; his height was nine feet, nine inches (74). On the other hand, dwarfs were seen at Rome. Manius Maximus and M. Tullius were only three feet tall (75). In the reign of Augustus, at Rome a man named Conopas was barely more than two feet in stature (75). The *monumenta* are quoted (76) as authority for the statement that the son of Euthymenes of Salamis had grown to four and one-half feet by his third year and had even attained puberty; his voice had become strong like that of a man (76).

We find it stated also that the bodies of all animals are heavier when they are dead than when they are alive; all animals also weigh more when they are asleep than when they are awake (77). The dead bodies of men float upon the back; those of women float with the face downward, as if, even after death, nature were desirous of sparing their modesty (77). It was thought that the bones of some men are solid and devoid of marrow, and that one mark of such persons is the fact that they are never thirsty and emit no perspiration (78). Some persons are never known to laugh (78). This was true of the grandfather of the Crassus who was slain by the Parthians (79). Some never weep (79). Socrates always appeared with the same countenance, and was never known to look either more gay or more sad than ordinary (79). Such a nature was possessed also by Diogenes the Cynic, Pyrrho, Heraclitus, and Timon, some of the greatest masters of philosophy (80). Vinnius Valens, who served as a centurion in the pretorian guard of Augustus, was in the habit of holding up wagons laden with casks until they were emptied, and of stopping a carriage with one hand and holding it back against all the efforts of the horses to drag it forward (82). A certain man, named Rusticelius, was in the habit of carrying his own mule (83). Salvius was able to mount a ladder though a weight of two hundred pounds was attached to his feet, a like weight to each hand, and two hundred pounds to each shoulder (83). Pliny saw a man by the name of Athanatus walk across the stage while he was wearing a leaden breastplate weighing five hundred pounds, and was shod with buskins of the same weight (83). When Milo, the wrestler, had once taken his stand, there was not a person who could move him from his position, and, when he grasped an apple in his hand, no one could so much as open one of his fingers (83).

Instances of remarkable agility are listed by Pliny. Philippides ran from Athens to Lacedaemon, a distance of 142 miles, in two days (84). Anystis and Philonides ran from Sicyon to Elis, 150 miles, in one day (84). Pliny thinks there are men in the Circus capable of incessant running for a distance of one hundred and sixty

miles, and he knows of a child eight years old who, between noon and evening, ran a distance of seventy-five miles (84).

Turning to acuteness of sight, Pliny quotes Cicero as saying that the *Iliad* of Homer was written on a piece of parchment so small as to be enclosed in a nut-shell (85; he does not tell where Cicero said this). Pliny makes mention also of a man who could distinguish objects at a distance of one hundred and thirty-five miles (85). M. Varro said this man was named Strabo, and that, during the Punic War, from Lilybaeum, the promontory of Sicily, he was able to see the fleet come out of the harbor of Carthage, and that he could even count the number of vessels (85). There were also instances of remarkable acuteness of hearing. The noise of the battle at the destruction of Sybaris was heard at Olympia (86). As an example of patience in enduring pain we have the case of Anaxarchus who, when he was put to torture to induce him to betray (Pliny does not say what his torturers were seeking to induce him to betray) bit off his tongue and spit in the face of the tyrant, thus destroying all hope of his making any statement (87).

Some men were known to have remarkable memories. King Cyrus knew by name all the soldiers of his army (88). L. Scipio knew the names of all the Roman people (88). Cineas, the ambassador of King Pyrrhus, knew by name all the members of the Senate and the Equestrian Order the day after his arrival in Rome (88). Mithradates, who was king of twenty-two nations, administered their laws in as many languages and could harangue each nation without employing an interpreter (88). There was in Greece a man named Charmidas, who, when a person asked him for any book in a library, could repeat the book by heart (89). Julius Caesar had a remarkable vigor of mind; he was able to write or read and at the same time dictate and listen. He could dictate to his secretaries four letters at once, on the most important business; indeed, if he was busy at nothing else, he could dictate as many as seven (91).

Many other notable accomplishments were reported in antiquity (110-127). Isocrates was able to sell a single oration of his for twenty thousand dollars (110). A certain woman at Rome, who had lately given birth to a child, obtained permission to visit her mother, who was confined in prison, but she was always carefully searched to prevent her from bringing any food to her mother. At last, she was detected nourishing her mother with the milk of her breast. In consideration of the marvelous affection of the daughter, the mother was pardoned, and both mother and daughter were maintained for the rest of their days at public expense (121). Asclepiades of Prusa acquired great fame by discovering a method of successfully treating diseases by wine. Once, breaking in upon a funeral ceremony, he saved the life of a man who had actually been placed on the funeral pile (124).

King Attalus gave \$100,000 at a public auction for a single picture by Aristides. Julius Caesar purchased two pictures by Timomachus, the *Medea* and the *Ajax*, for \$80,000, with the intention of placing them in the Temple of Venus Genetrix (126).

Pliny digresses somewhat to record the prices of slaves (128-129). He says that, so far as he knows, the highest price ever given for a man born in slavery was that paid for Daphnis, the grammarian, who was sold to M. Scaurus for thirty-five thousand dollars (128). In his day, he thinks, comic actors have fetched a higher price, but then they were purchasing their own freedom (128). In the previous century Roscius, the actor, earned \$25,000 annually (129). The army commissary (*dispensator*) in the Armenian War received his commission from Nero for the neat sum of \$650,000. Pliny qualifies this statement by saying that, in this case, the consideration was the profit to be derived from the war, and it was not the value of the man that was paid for (129). Lutorius (Clutorius?) Priscus, says Pliny, bought a eunuch from Sejanus for two and a half million dollars (129).

In speaking of good fortune, Pliny tells us that during the whole course of the ages only one woman, Lampido, a Lacedaemonian, was the daughter of a king, the wife of a king, and the mother of a king (133). It is surprising that so diligent a collector of facts as Pliny should have been acquainted with only one example of this kind; at least a half dozen more instances in antiquity are known. Berenice, says Pliny (133), was the only woman who was daughter, sister, and mother of victors in the Olympic games. The family of the Curios has been the only family to produce three orators in succession (133). One of the most fortunate individuals was L. Metellus; he attained all his ambitions, namely to be the foremost warrior, the best orator, the bravest general, enjoy the highest honors, possess consummate wisdom, be the most distinguished senator, acquire a large fortune, have many children, and be the most illustrious person in the State (139-140). His grandson was another rare instance of human felicity. In addition to the many honors he won through the conquest of Macedonia, he was carried to the funeral pile by his four sons. One of these had been a praetor, three of them consuls; two had obtained triumphs, one had been censor (142).

On the other hand, by a strange paradox the Emperor Augustus is cited as the embodiment of greatest misfortune, although he is revered and considered one of the most successful mortals (147). Pliny notes his rejection from the post of master-of-horse by his uncle (147); the hatred produced by the proscription in the days of the Triumvirate (147); his alliance in the Triumvirate with some of the very worst citizens, and that, too, with an unequal share of influence, since he was overshadowed by Antony (147); his illness at the Battle of Philippi (148); his flight (Pliny gives no details here), and his having to remain three days concealed in a marsh, though he was suffering from sickness (148); his shipwreck on the coast of Sicily, where he was again under the necessity of concealing himself, this time in a cave (148); the desperation which caused him to beg Proculeius to put him to death when he was hard-pressed by the enemy in a naval engagement; his alarm about the uprising at Perusia (148); his anxiety at the Battle of Actium (148); the extreme danger to which he was exposed from the falling of a tower during

the Pannonian War (149); seditions so numerous among his soldiers (149); so many attacks by dangerous diseases (149). One must also keep in mind the suspicions which he entertained respecting the intentions of Marcellus, the disgraceful banishment, as it were, of Agrippa, the many plots against his life, the deaths of his children, of which he was accused, the adultery of his daughter and the discovery of her parricidal designs (149), the withdrawal (*contumeliosus . . . secessus*) of his son-in-law, Nero, another instance of adultery (that of his granddaughter) (149). Among many other evils were the machinations of his wife and of Tiberius (150), the thoughts of which occupied his last moments, and the fact that, although he was favored with apotheosis, he had to leave the son of his enemy his heir (150).

We find a chapter on the length of life (153-159). Pliny tells us that Quintus Fabius Maximus was an augur for sixty-three years (156). M. Perperna and L. Volusius Saturninus survived all those whose votes each had solicited on the occasion of his consulship (156). Perperna, living ninety-eight years, left after him only seven of those whose names he had enrolled when he was censor (156). M. Valerius Corvinus completed one hundred years, forty-six of which intervened between his first and his sixth consulship. He occupied the curule chair twenty-one times, a record absolutely without parallel (157).

Pliny goes on to philosophize (162-170). The gift of life bestowed upon us by nature is extremely uncertain (162). The measure of life is, indeed, but scanty and brief, even when it is largest; this is clear if we only reflect upon the extent of eternity. Besides, if we take into account our sleep during the nights, we can properly be said to live only half the period of our lives. Again, we ought not to reckon as years of life the years of infancy, during which we are not sensible of our existence, or the years of old age, which is prolonged only for the punishment of those who arrive at it. There are so many kinds of danger, so many diseases, so many apprehensions, so many cares. So often we invoke death that really nothing else is so frequently the object of our wishes (167). Nature has in reality bestowed no greater blessing on man than the shortness of life. Through old age the senses become dull, the limbs torpid; the sight, the hearing, the legs, the teeth, and the organs of digestion all die before we die, and yet we reckon this state a part of our life (168).

Under the caption of pseudo-resurrections we find a number of interesting cases (173-179). Aviola, an ex-consul, came to life again when he was on the funeral pile, but, because of the violence of the flames, no assistance could be rendered to him (173). The soul of Hermotimus of Clazomenae was in the habit of leaving his body and of wandering into distant countries, whence it brought back numerous accounts of various things (174). The body, in the meantime, was left apparently lifeless. One day his enemies burned his body, so that the soul, on its return, was deprived of its sheath, as it were. The soul of Aristeas was seen flying out of his mouth, in the form of a raven (174). We have also a Rip Van Winkle story. Epimenides, of Cnossus, when a boy, being fatigued by heat and over-exertion, fell asleep in a

cave, where he slept for fifty-seven years (175). When he awoke, as though it had been on the following day, he was astonished at the changes which he saw all around him. It is not improbable that we are indebted to this story for the amusing tale by Washington Irving<sup>7a</sup>.

Varro claimed that he knew a man who, having been carried to the funeral pile, returned on foot to his own house (176). In the Sicilian War Gabienus, one of Augustus's naval commanders, was taken prisoner by Sextus Pompey, who ordered his throat to be cut (178-179). With his head almost severed from his body, he lay upon the seashore for a whole day. Toward evening, with groans and entreaties he begged the assembled crowds to prevail upon Pompey to send several of his friends to talk with him, since he had just returned from the shades below and had some important news to communicate. Pompey complied and was informed that the good cause and virtuous partisans of Pompey were well pleasing to the infernal deities and that success awaited him. Gabienus continued that he had been ordered to make announcement to this effect, and that, as proof of its truthfulness, he himself would expire the very moment he had fulfilled his commission. His death took place immediately afterwards.

Diodorus, professor of logic, died of mortification because he could not immediately answer some question which had been put to him by Stilpo by way of a joke (180). When Felix, a charioteer of the red faction, was placed on the funeral pile, one of his admirers threw himself upon the pile (180). The opposing faction tried to detract from the glory of the charioteer by stating that the spectator had been overpowered by the strength of the perfumes.

Now, with poor marshaling of material, Pliny includes a chapter on the nature of the soul (188-190). Here he is in accord with the theories of Democritus and Epicurus. He claims that all men, after their last day, return to what they were before their first day, and that after death there is no more sensation left in the body or in the soul than there was before birth (188). Because of our vanity we fashion for ourselves life even in death and after death. At one time we believe in the immortality of the soul, at another time in transfiguration, and at another time in sensations of the dead. Then again we worship the spirits and make a deity of him who has just ceased to be a man, as if, indeed, man's mode of breathing were in any way different from that of other animals. For the latter no one ever presaged anything like immortality (188). What is the actual substance of the soul when it is by itself? Of what material does it consist? Where is the seat of its thoughts? How is it to see or hear or touch? Of what use is it, or what can it avail if it has not these faculties? (189). Where, too, is its residence? What vast multitudes of souls and spirits must there be after the lapse of so many ages. But all these ideas, thinks Pliny, are the mere figments of childish ravings and of that mortality which is so anxious never to cease to exist. What downright madness it is to suppose that life is to recommence

<<sup>7a</sup>In this connection we may compare the article by Professor Bassett, to be found in this issue. See page 38, note 1. C. K. >

after death (190). What repose are we to enjoy if after death we must fear the censorship of our acts? How much more easy, then, and how much better is it for each of us to put his trust in himself, and, guided by his knowledge of what his state was before birth, to assume that his state after death will be the same (190).

Pliny brings the book to a close with a few historical matters (192-215). He states that all nations employed barbers, although the Romans were more tardy than other nations in accepting their services (211). They were introduced into Italy from Sicily in 300 B. C. Africanus the Younger was the first Roman who adopted the custom of shaving every day. The Romans were also slow in introducing the division of time (212). In the Twelve Tables the rising and the setting of the sun are the only things that are mentioned relative to time. Some years later, the hour of midday was added, with the summoner of the consuls proclaiming it aloud as soon as, from the senate-house, he caught sight of the sun between the Rostra and the Graecostasis. This could be done, of course, only in clear weather. The first sun-dial in Rome was erected, it is said, in 292 B. C., at the Temple of Quirinus (213). The hours, however, still remained a matter of uncertainty in cloudy weather. Scipio Nasica was the first to divide the hours of the day and night into equal parts by means of a *clipsydra* dedicated in 159 B. C. (215). For so long a period had the Romans remained without any exact division of the day.

The seventh book of the *Natural History*, the anthropological section of his work, Pliny summarized (in Book 1, which is a Table of Contents) with the statement that he had included in it seven hundred and forty-seven remarkable events, narratives, and observations. I remind my hearers that the present paper is a very abbreviated introduction to Pliny's encyclopedia. I have merely selected a few novel and striking incidents and accounts to illustrate the contents of the book, and I shall allow the audience to make its own evaluation of the *Natural History*.

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#### THE DEATH OF STAPHYLUS NONNUS, DIONYSIACA 18.5-19.11

The classic sources and equivalents of humorous anecdotes that circulate to-day deserve the attention of some doctorand. 'Noman' (Homer, *Odyssey* 9.366, 408) had a recent revival, with a burglar playing Odysseus and the timid husband playing Polyphemus.

In the early days of the Eighteenth Amendment there was current in Vermont the story of an elderly female who brought with her on the train from Montreal an enormous doll, "for her little grandchild", she said. On close scrutiny by the customs official the doll proved to be the modern equivalent of the 'child' that Mnesilochus at the Thesmophoria seized as a hostage, only to discover that it was a camouflaged *ascus* of wine 'bootlegged' by a celebrant who feared a drought at the festival (Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousae* 689-734).

There must be many of these resurrected *asteia* of ancient days<sup>1</sup>.

I recently noticed in the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus a parallel to the modern story of the mint julep<sup>1</sup>. The modern story runs somewhat as follows. A Northerner traveling in Virginia in summer and caught in a thunderstorm seeks refuge in the mansion of an estate which he is passing, whose proprietor offers liquid refreshment. The stranger, remarking that he has seen a bed of mint along the road nearby, suggests a mint julep. His host courteously acquiesces, although he is unfamiliar with this delectable, but insidious concoction. The result is that many a mint julep is prepared and enjoyed before the stranger goes on his way. A few years later the Northerner, being again in the same region, decides to pay his respects to his former host. He finds the estate showing signs of neglect, and the old servant who answers his knock is in shabby mourning. When he inquires for the master, the old darkie sadly shakes his head and says "Ole mars', he ain' no mo'. A dam' Yankee, he came an' taught ole mars' to mix weeds with his licker, an' ole mars', he done gone drink hisself to death".

In the *Dionysiaca* (18.5-102) Dionysus, leading his wild horde to the conquest of India, is entertained by Staphylus, King of Assyria, in the latter's palace, and in return for the king's hospitality provides him with abundant wine. Staphylus, his aged father, his son, his wife, and everyone else in the palace become uproariously drunk, and indulge in wild orgies the whole day long (18.102-154). The next morning the royal family is up betimes—but not all of them without a 'morning head' (206)—to bid the divine guest *bon voyage*. King Staphylus gives the god as guest-gifts a golden amphora and 'cups of silver from which *till now* he had been wont to quaff the milk of she-goats' (212-213). Dionysus goes throughout the land of Assyria, everywhere planting the vine (322-326). But soon death overtakes King Staphylus, and wailing fills the palace (329-333). The poet at this point records no more than the fact of the king's demise, but later he adds a pertinent detail (19.9: see below). After some time (18.334) Dionysus returns to visit Staphylus, 'remembering his hospitable board' (336). He finds the queen unkempt, in shabby raiment, and with a pallor on the cheeks that he had seen flushed with wine. From her he learns the sad truth: 'My husband *fell sick*; he is dead' (19.9-11).

Nonnus was no Hippocrates; he aimed to be a second Homer. He does not diagnose the malady of which Staphylus died, but he gives the facts as set forth above. Staphylus, already past middle life (18.87), forsakes the 'milk-wagon', and indulges in wine without stint; he dies of *disease* (*νόσος*, 19.9).

In the Greek epic there are four normal causes of death: old age, 'the darts of Apollo', violence, and disease. The heroes of the epic commonly die from one of the first three. The gift of wine brought death to Icarus, though in a different way (47.41-61, 70-72, 106-124). It seems clear that Staphylus died of alcoholism.

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<sup>1</sup>See Professor Kaufman's paper in this issue, page 37, note 7a, and the part of the text to which this note is attached. C. K.

## CLASSICAL ARTICLES IN NON-CLASSICAL PERIODICALS

### IV

The Expository Times—February, Recent Biblical Archaeology, J. W. Jack; The 'Codex Sinaiticus', A. Souter.

Fortnightly Review—January, The Lost Atlantis, Richard Clavering ["The earliest record is found in Plato's dialogue known as *The Timaeus*.... If the problem of Atlantis were only associated with Plato's account of Solon's story, it might well be regarded as the product of the sage's own invention for the purpose of extolling the prowess of his nation and adding to the reputed greatness of his ancestors...."] Mr. Clavering assumes that Plato's story of Atlantis is not fiction, but the record of an historic event]; February, The Origin of the Bible Text, Frederic Kenyon.

The Golden Book—March, "Platonic Love".... Irwin Edman ["... Freud could not recognize more insistently than Plato the basis of even the most lyrical flights of love as originating in sex and in the senses.... Love begins in the senses, and rises lifted by the energy and glamor of physical passion, to a mystical absorption in that ideal Good, which is what the lover really loves in his beloved.... Plato was not the author of the anaemic abstraction that has become known as 'Platonic love'"]; May, Helen Retires, John Erskine, Part I ["The Sequel to 'The Private Life of Helen of Troy' in the form of an opera libretto.... The beauty of Helen of Troy, having shaken the foundations of the world, does likewise with the Island of the Blest...."]; June, Socrates Drinks the Hemlock, As Reported by Plato [Selections from Plato's *Apology* 39 E to the end, and a passage from the *Phaedo*, from 115 A to the end of the dialogue]; June, Helen Retires, Part II, John Erskine.

The Harvard Graduates' Magazine—March, The English Teacher and the Lost Humanities, Donald Davidson ["... If students do not learn in their English classes about the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome, or the Gothic edifice of mediaeval thought, or the Renaissance culture that grew upon its ruins, the chances are that they will never learn about these things at all.... In a considerable sense, the English teacher is the last official preceptor and interpreter of the old culture and almost the only influential person of learning who has an effective standard with which to measure the new culture"].

Historisches Jahrbuch—Band 53, Heft 4, Review, favorable, by Franz Schehl, of E. Stein, Die Kaiserlichen Beamten und Truppenkörper im Römischen Deutschland Unter dem Prinzipat, Mit Benutzung von E. Ritterlings Nachlab; Review, favorable, by Franz Schehl, of E. Ritterling, Fasti des Römischen Deutschland Unter dem Prinzipat, Mit Beiträgen von E. Groag Herausg *<gegeben>* von E. Stein.

Historische Zeitschrift—Band 150, Heft 1, Die Kulturelle und Politische Entwicklung des Ausgehenden

Griechentums-Stadtrepublik und Monarchischer Flächenstaat, J. Kromayer; Review, unfavorable, by Fritz Geyer, of Grace Harriet Macurdy, Hellenistic Queens: A Study of Woman-Power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt.

Hound and Horn—January: March, Icarus in November, Alec B. Stevenson [this is a poem, of forty-four verses].

The Illustrated London News—December 9, 1934, Early Christian Mosaics in St. Sophia.... [seven photographic illustrations, accompanied by a descriptive note]; St. Sophia's Escape From Fire: A Mosque With Christian Mosaics [two photographic illustrations, accompanied by a descriptive note]; December 16, The Fate of Jericho Revealed By the Spade: "The Bronze Age City of Jericho Perished By Earthquake and Fire About 1400 B. C."; Definite Conclusions, After Four Years of Excavation, and New Discoveries on a Famous Biblical Site, John Garstang [with eighteen photographic illustrations]; December 23, Cyprus Yields a New Gem of Greek Art, Besides the Neolithic Remains Illustrated Elsewhere in This Number: A Beautiful Head of Apollo Assigned to the Fourth Century B. C., Found Near Potamia [one photographic illustration, accompanied by a brief note]; The Oldest Civilisation of Cyprus Now Revealed: A Neolithic Settlement Discovered Near Limassol; The First Extensive Stone Age Remains Found in the Island, P. Dikaios [with fifteen photographic illustrations]; December 30, The 4th Century Sinai Codex: A Great Bible MS. For the Nation [one photographic illustration of two pages of the Codex Sinaiticus showing "part of the 18th Psalm", accompanied by a descriptive note]; January 6, An Outstanding Treasure Which the Nation Must Possess: the £100,000 *Codex Sinaiticus* on Its Arrival at the British Museum, Where It is on Exhibition.... [one photographic illustration, accompanied by a descriptive note]; Where the Codex Sinaiticus Was Saved from Burning as Waste Paper: A Monastery on Mount Sinai [six photographic illustrations, supplied by Miss Kathleen M. Kenyon, accompanied by a descriptive note]; January 13, A Pergamon Prototype of the Modern Spa: The Temple of Asklepios (Aesculapius) at Pergamon, Where Pilgrims were Treated by Sun-bathing and Physical Exercise; a Great Excavation Enterprise Completed, Sven Larsen [with seven photographic illustrations]. "... Some years ago a generous gift of money was made by an American for excavating the Asklepieion at Pergamon. Dr. Wiegand, of Berlin, began the task in 1928, and is now completing it...."; A Night in Ancient Pergamon in the Heart of Modern Berlin: Whole Buildings of Antiquity Reconstructed Within a Museum [eight photographic illustrations, accompanied by a descriptive note]; January 20, "Samian" Ware Revealed as a Home Product in Roman Britain. A "Samian" Kiln on English Soil: the Unique Find at Colchester [seven photographic illustrations, one reconstruction drawing, and three Plates of designs, accompanied by a long descriptive note]; January 27, Glories of Per-

sepolis Revealed: A South-to-North Panorama of the Restored Stairway to the Hall of Darius [three photographic illustrations, supplied by Ernst Herzfeld, accompanied by a descriptive note]; The Pharos of Alexandria: Revelatory Measurements in a Newly Discovered Mediaeval Manuscript, unsigned [with one diagram and two reconstruction drawings. The article is a summary of two essays, one by each of two Spanish writers, on the Pharos of Alexandria]; February 10, The Sepulchres of the Sumerian Princes of Lagash Discovered: Objects Over 4000 Years Old from Tombs of Unique Design [nine photographic illustrations, and one map, accompanied by a descriptive note]; February 17, Swift and Sure, Being an Appreciation <, unsigned, > of Edward C. Ash, The Book of the Greyhound [this review is accompanied by four drawings of designs on Greek coins and three photographic illustrations regarding the greyhound in classical Greece]; One of the Great Mysteries of History Solved?: Professor Pironti's Claim to have Deciphered the Etruscan Language.... [two photographic illustrations, accompanied by a brief descriptive note]; The Armour of a Warrior of the Fifth Century B. C. Found in a Grave in Italy.... [two photographic illustrations, accompanied by a brief descriptive note]; February 24, The Cradle of Civilization, Being an Appreciation <, uncritical, by C. K. A., > of C. Leonard Woolley and others, Ur Excavations, Volume II, in two volumes: The Royal Cemetery [with four photographic illustrations, and five colored reproductions of paintings]; March 3, The Acropolis Weakened by Rain, To Be Strengthened with Cement [two photographic illustrations, accompanied by a brief note. In one photograph the Parthenon *appears* to be an L-shaped building]; An Ancient Syrian Kingdom and its Gold: Rich Discoveries During the Fifth Season at Ras Shamra (Ancient Ugarit), Including Two Exquisitely Wrought Gold Vessels of the 14th Century B. C., Claude F. A. Schaeffer [with fifteen photographic illustrations (two in color)]; March 17, A Unique Ur Statuette of 3300 B. C., and other New Discoveries, Leonard Woolley [note, accompanied by five photographic illustrations. One of the captions reads, "The only work of sculpture found in any grave of the Royal Cemetery at Ur: an alabaster statuette of a Sumerian woman, of about 3300 B. C. (10 in. high)"]; March 24, An Elgin Treasure Now First Shown: "Athena" With the Owl [four photographic illustrations, with a note by E. J. Forsdyke. "A Greek Bronze Statuette of Athena (470-460 B. C.) brought with the Elgin Marbles in 1816, but never hitherto illustrated or exhibited: the Goddess of Wisdom Flying her owl...."]; April 14, Revelations of a Rich Sumerian Culture and High Artistry About 4000 B. C.: The Great Shaft at Ur Dug Down 55 Feet to "Jemdet Nasr" Graves, C. Leonard Woolley [with ten photographic illustrations]; April 21, New Proof of Greek Influence in Ptolemaic Egypt: Hermopolis Discoveries: Temples; Homeric Legend in Fresco, by

Sami Gabra [with seven photographic illustrations. "... But the most amazing discovery of the season was the series of painted scenes covering the walls of two sepulchral buildings.... The subjects represented were taken from the story of Agamemnon and from episodes in the legend of Oedipus.... The discoveries show how deeply Greek influence had penetrated into the Nile Valley during the five centuries following the accession of Ptolemy I., thanks to Greek schools, in which Egyptians learned by heart Greek poems and legends, and to the theatres, in which Greek tragedies were performed"]; A Fine Model: Imperial Rome in the 4th Century; The Eternal City in the Time of Constantine [three photographic illustrations, accompanied by a brief note and indices]; April 28, Relics from the Past of Current Interest: A Page of Antiquities from Italy and England [included are a view of the Castel Sant' Angelo, and five views of "exhibits in the wing of the Naples Museum devoted to Ancient Technology and Mechanics"]; April 28, A Mystery of the Ancient Goldsmith's Craft Solved: The Etruscan Method of Granulation—for Long a Secret—Rediscovered [with eighteen photographic illustrations and two diagrams. Under this title are two articles, The Discovery of the Lost Etruscan Art of Granulation, by E. J. Lewis, and My Rediscovery of the Etruscan Art of Granulation, by W. T. Blackband]; May 19, A Fifth Century Codex of the New Testament in Syriac, Discovered in an Armenian Monastery.... [one photographic illustration, accompanied by a brief note]; A Great Discovery of Sumerian Sculptures: A Unique Hoard of Statues, 5000 years old, Found at Tell Asmar, Including Sacred Images "Without Parallel Among Known Babylonian Works of Art", Henry Frankfort [with eighteen photographic illustrations, and two Plates of illustrations, in color]; May 26, Art Relics of Roman Times in Austria: A Vienna Exhibition, H. Kaufmann [with six photographic illustrations]; Spoils of the Spade at Armageddon: Discoveries at Megiddo in Palestine, Relating Partly to the Days of Solomon and Ahab, and Illuminating Many Passages in the Old Testament, Herbert Gordon May [with two reconstruction drawings and eight photographic illustrations]; June 2, Discoveries Helping to Map the Athenian Agora: Two Buildings Identified in the Agora at Athens, Locating Others Described by Pausanias; An Altar and a Council Dining-hall, with Sculpture and Pottery Representing a Long Period in Athenian History, Theodore Leslie Shear [with twelve photographic illustrations]; June 9, Sumerian Sculpture about 3000 B. C.: Another Great Discovery, at Khafaje, Rivalling That at Tell Asmar, With Points of Difference; A Wealth of Ancient Statues, Marked by Greater Realism and a Preponderance of Female Figures, Recovered from a Plundered Site, Henry Frankfort [with twenty-four photographic illustrations and one Plate of water-colored illustrations].

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